



Source : A Taste of Freedom – a Collection of Talks by Ajahn Chah

Epilogue

... Do you know where it will end? Or will you just keep on learning like this ... ? Or is there an end to it ... ? That's okay but it's the external study, not the internal study. For the internal study you have to study these eyes, these ears, this nose, this tongue, this body and this mind. This is the real study. The study of books is just the external study, it's really hard to get it finished.

When the eye sees form what sort of things happens? When ear, nose, and tongue experience sounds, smells and tastes, what takes place? When the body and mind come into contact with touches and mental states, what reactions take place? Are there still greed, aversion and delusion there? Do we get lost in forms, sounds, smells, tastes, textures and moods? This is the internal study. It has a point of completion.

If we study but don't practice we won't get any results. It's like a person who raises cows. In the morning he takes the cow out to eat grass, in the evening he brings it back to its pen - but he never drinks the cow's milk. Study is alright, but don't let it be like this. You should raise the cow and drink its milk too. You must study and practice as well to get the best results.

Here, I'll explain it further. It's like a person who raises chickens, but he doesn't get the eggs. All he gets is the chicken dung! This is what I tell people who raise chickens back home! Watch out you don't become like that! This means we study the scriptures but we don't know how to let

go of defilements, we don't know how to "push" greed, aversion and delusion from our mind. Study without practice, without this "giving up," brings no results. This is why I compare it to someone who raises chickens but doesn't collect the eggs, he just collects the dung. It's the same thing.

Because of this, the Buddha wanted us to study the scriptures, and then to give up evil actions through body, speech and mind; to develop goodness in our deeds, speech and thoughts. The real worth of mankind will come to fruition through our deeds, speech and thoughts. But if we only talk well, without acting accordingly, it's not yet complete. Or if we do good deeds but the mind is still not good, this is still not complete. The Buddha taught to develop fine deeds, fine speech and fine thoughts. This is the treasure of mankind. The study and the practice must both be good.

The Eightfold Path of the Buddha, the path of practice, has eight factors. These eight factors are nothing other than this very body: two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, one tongue and one body. This is the path. And the mind is the one who follows the path. Therefore both the study and the practice exist in our body, speech and mind.

Have you ever seen scriptures which teach about anything other than the body, the speech and the mind? The scriptures only teach about this; nothing else. Defilements are born here. If you know them they die right here. So you should understand that the practice and the study both exist right here. If we study just this much we can know everything. It's like our speech: to speak one word of Truth is better than a lifetime of wrong speech. Do you understand?

One who studies and doesn't practice is like a ladle of soup pot. It's in the pot every day but it doesn't know the flavor of the soup. If you don't practice, even if you study till the day you die, you won't know the taste of Freedom!

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